CHARLTON COMICS
BILLY THE KID
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DON DIABLO AND HIS PET VULTURES VS. BILLY THE KID

MISSILE FIRING TANK

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OVER 6 FEET LONG

LARGE ENOUGH FOR TWO KIDS INSIDE

FEATURES

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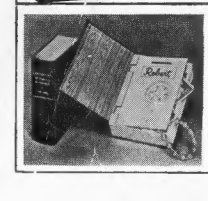

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HONOR HOUSE DEPT. 21BS46 LYNBROOK, N.Y. 11563

DON DIABLO & THE VULTURES

DON DIABLO, THEY CALLED HIM IN VULTURE VALLEY... DON DIABLO, THE MONSTER WHO HELD LIFE-OR-DEATH POWER OVER THE ENSLAVED NATIVES HE HAD WORKING IN HIS MINES! THEY COULD NOT ESCAPE... WHEN THEY TRIED TO RUN, HIS VULTURES FLEW AFTER THEM AND THEN HIS BRUTAL GUARDS KNEW WHERE THEIR VICTIMS COULD BE FOUND! INTO THIS PLACE OF DEATH, WILLIAM BONNEY CAME... TO DIE PERHAPS? WHY WAS HE HERE?

MY PETS KNOW THEY WILL FEAST ON YOUR FLESH, GRINGO!

I WARNED SEÑOR BONNEY EVEN HE CANNOT HELP US HERE!

CALL THEM OFF, DON DIABLO! DON'T LET THEM GET ME!

BILLY THE KID

BILLY THE KID Vol . No 69, November, 1968.

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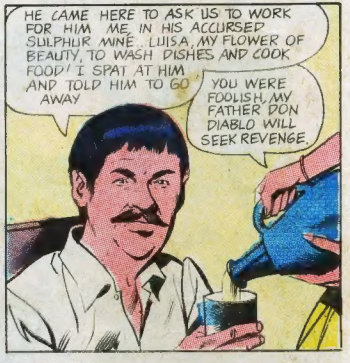
ONCE THE GIRL IN RAGS IN VULTURE VALLEY HAD BEEN PRETTY AND SMILING ONCE WHEN BILLY THE KID RODE SOUTH OF THE RIO GRANDE TO VISIT HER FATHER PABLO OLLEGO A SMILE HAD WELCOMED HIM
BUENOS DIAS, SENOR BONNEY!
CALL THE GRINGO CHIVITO... THE KID. THE LITTLE GOAT, SO HEE IS KNOWN TO OUR COUNTRYMEN.
CALL ME CHIVITO, OR AMIGO, OR MI AMOR, SENORITA. JUST CALL ME WHEN THE CHILE CON CARNE AND TORTILLAS ARE COOKED!

TO A FRIEND, PABLO OLLEGO EXPLAINED THE TROUBLE IN HIS HEART
TO THE WEST, IN THE MOUNTAIN DESERT, THERE IS AN EVIL MAN.. WE CALL HIM DON DIABLO!

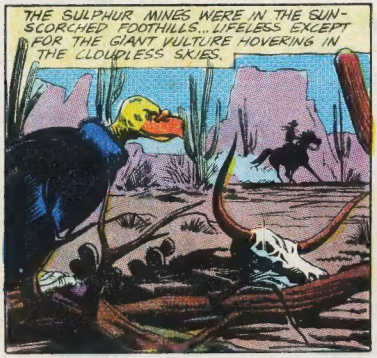

HE CAME HERE TO ASK US TO WORK FOR HIM. ME, IN HIS ACCURSED SULPHUR MINE. LUISA, MY FLOWER OF BEAUTY, TO WASH DISHES AND COOK FOOD! I SPAT AT HIM AND TOLD HIM TO GO AWAY
YOU WERE FOOLISH, MY FATHER DON DIABLO WILL SEEK REVENGE.

LATER
NO MORE SONGS MI AMOR! I AM SO GLAD YOU HAVE COME TO VISIT WITH US!

YOU ARE OUR TRUE FRIEND AMIGO

SIX WEEKS LATER, A LETTER CAME FROM MEXICO TO BILLY THE KID.
PABLO IS AFRAID FOR HIMSELF AND LUISA. ONE OF HIS NEIGHBORS WAS TAKEN BY DON DIABLO... TO WORK IN THE SULPHUR MINE.

RECKON I'LL TAKE A PASEO DOWN THATAWAY. THIS DIABLO HOMBRE SOUNDS LIKE TROUBLE!


THE SULPHUR MINES WERE IN THE SUN-SCORCHED FOOTHILLS... LIFELESS EXCEPT FOR THE GIANT VULTURE HOVERING IN THE CLOUDLESS SKIES.

DIABLO'S PLACE IS IN VULTURE VALLEY... THIS MUST BE IT.

THIS WAS IT... AND DON DIABLO WAS AT HIS MINE! HE WAS HAPPY AT THE MOMENT... HAVING JUST PUNISHED A SLAVE LABORER
DRAG HIM BACK INTO THE MINE AND CHAIN HIM THERE! FEED HIM HALF RATIONS AND LET HIM REST WHEN HE DROPS!

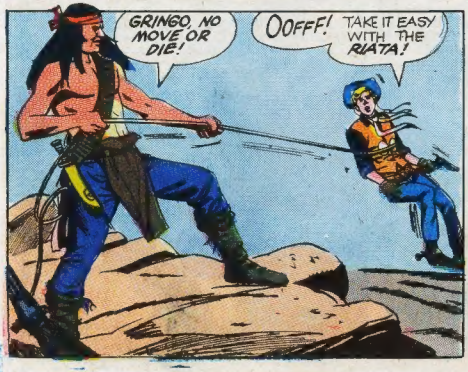
YOUR REBELLIOUS DAUGHTER IS OBEYING MY ORDERS NOW, FOOL... SHE KNOWS YOU WILL FEED MY PETS IF SHE DISPLEASES ME.
YOU WILL PAY, MONSTER! SOME DAY SOON, YOU WILL PAY FOR THIS!

THAT VULTURE.. IS FAT AN' HE'S WAITIN'...

CRACK!
...FOR ME!
ZAP

IT'S HIM OR ME!
BLAM!

HEARD SOMETHING... WHAT??


GRINGO, NO MOVE OR DIE!
OOFFF!
TAKE IT EASY WITH THE RIATA!

GRINGO KEEP GUN, WALK AHEAD. MASTER NEED GRINGO TO WORK IN DEEP PLACE OF DEAD.
HE MEANS THE SULPHUR MINE...

DON DIABLO'S HACIENDA WAS MORE LIKE A FORT... HIS GUARDS WERE OUT-LAWS AND KILLERS RANSOMED OUT OF MEXICAN PRISONS!
GRINGO, MASTER!
BUENO, GUILLERMO. YOU WILL RECEIVE YOUR USUAL REWARD... EVEN THOUGH THIS ONE IS SMALL!
YOU'RE NOT GOING TO SHACKLE ME DOWN THERE!

SHUT YOUR MOUTH, GRINGO!
YOU SEE, YANQUI? A FOOLISH TALK WILL BRING PAIN!
SOCK!

IF YOU TRY TO USE YOUR WEAPON, YANQUI, YOU WILL DIE!
IF I DO HOMBRE, I WON'T DIE ALONE!

THEN... BILLY THE KID'S WORST FEARS WERE CONFIRMED THE GIRL WAS A PRISONER HERE!
LUISA! IS YOUR FATHER HERE?
YOU KNOW HER, YANQUI? AHH! I BEGIN TO COMPREHEND.

YOU ARE EL CHIVITO, THE GRINGO WHOM THEY EXPECT TO COME AND RESCUE THEM! THEY ARE MUY ESTUPIDO! GUARD! BRING PABLO UP HERE PRONTO!

ON YOUR KNEES, DOG!
SENOR OLLEGO, YOU HAVE A VISITOR!
PABLO! MI AMIGO!

PAPA!
TOUCHING, IS IT NOT, GRINGO?
MY BULLETS WILL TOUCH YOUR HEART, ANIMAL!

BILLY THE KID WAS FASTER THAN HE'D EVER BEEN BEFORE... HIS HAND GRIPPED THE COLT, HE DREW IT, THUMB DRAWING BACK THE HAMMER, TRIGGER FINGER ALREADY TIGHTENING...

...BUT THEN...

YOU FOOL... MY VULTURES WILL EAT YOU ALIVE IF YOU ATTEMPT TO HARM ME! I CAN KILL YOU AT WILL...
BANG!
GET THEM AWAY FROM ME!

MY LITTLE PETS LIKE YOU, GRINGO!
FILTHY THINGS, YAAHHH!

WE MUST NOT BLAME EL CHIVITO! EVERY BRAVE MAN HAS A SECRET THING HE GREATLY FEARS!
POOR BILLY... I NEVER THOUGHT I WOULD SEE HIM SCREAM IN FEAR!

I HAD HEARD OF EL CHIVITO... IF HE HAD BEEN TRULY FORMIDABLE I WOULD HAVE HAD HIM EXECUTED ON THE SPOT! BUT HE IS A COWARD... WE CAN GET MUCH WORK FROM HIM BEFORE HIS COWARDLY HEART STOPS BEATING!

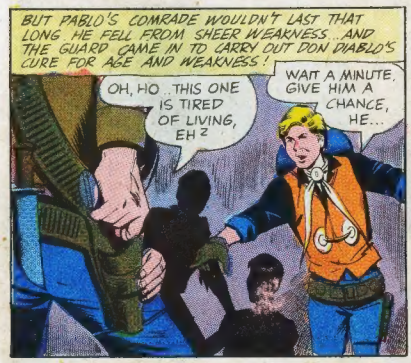
INSIDE, YANQUI DOG!
THE HERO PABLO SAID WOULD SET US FREE!

DO NOT GRIEVE, MI AMIGO! ALL OF US HAVE SHOWN FEAR OF DON DIABLO AND HIS CREATURES!

IF I HADN'T SEEMED LIKE A COWARD, HE WOULD'VE HAD ME KILLED THEN AND THERE... AND I WOULD NEVER HELP FREE YOU!
YOU PLAYED A ROLE, CHIVITO! I KNEW ALL THE TIME YOU FELT NO FEAR!

YOUR FRIEND IS TOO LATE TO SAVE ME, PABLO. I CANNOT LIFT THE BASKETS OF SULPHUR...WHEN I FAIL I WILL BE EXECUTED.
IS THIS TRUE, PABLO?

ES VERDAD, CHIVITO, VER' 'TRUE'. DIABLO'S GUARDS DESTROY THE WEAK. I TOO WILL SOON DIE.
OH, NO, YOU WON'T!

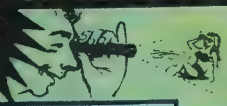

BUT PABLO'S COMRADE WOULDN'T LAST THAT LONG. HE FELL FROM SHEER WEAKNESS...AND THE GUARD CAME IN TO CARRY OUT DON DIABLO'S CURE FOR AGE AND WEAKNESS!
OH, HO...THIS ONE IS TIRED OF LIVING, EH?
WAIT A MINUTE, GIVE HIM A CHANCE, HE...

SHUT YOUR MOUTH, GRINGO, JUST BE GLAD IT IS NOT YOUR TIME TO DIE!
I GUESS TALKIN' DOESN'T DO MUCH GOOD!

NO, CHIVITO,... LOOK OUT!
SOCK!!

YOU'LL DIE BEFORE ANY OF US ANIMAL!
TURN AROUND, GRINGO... I WANT TO SEE YOUR EYES WHEN I PULL THE TRIGGER!
CONTINUED...

Exclusive fun products by Mail



SECRET SPY SCOPE

Full 6-power pocket periscope/field magnifier lets you "peek" to your hearts content watch sporting events, races, incl. 30-power full [illegible] scope to [illegible] money-back guarantee if not satisfied

No. F-25 . . . . . Only $2.95

GROW LIVE MONSTERS

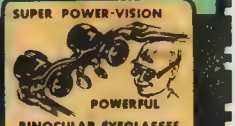
[illegible] full accessory kit. Will grow green monster hair right before your eyes. Complete kit

No. F-15 . . . . . only $1.00

LOUD NOSE BLOWER

Get roars of laughter - insert thus whose blower in your handkerchief and blow. It sounds like the roof caved in really [illegible]

No. F-23 . . . . . only 25c



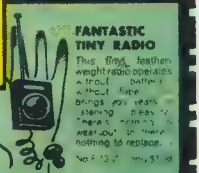
SUPER POWER-VISION POWERFUL BINOCULAR EYEGLASSES

The binoculars you wear like eyeglasses! Rugged, strong, yet so light they do not [illegible] baseball! Amazing [illegible] Comparable to models selling at $3.95. Now yours for only $1.00 or 2 for $1.75.

TRICK BLACK SOAP

Looks like regular bar of soap. Watch your friends wash their faces - in horror as they get blacker and blacker. Completely washes off with regular soap

[illegible] only 25c



FANTASTIC TINY RADIO

This tiny, feather weight radio operates without batteries. Great tone brings you weather, sporting news, top hits. Operates on [illegible] power. Wear-out or [illegible] nothing to replace.

No. F-13 . . . only $1.49

THROW YOUR VOICE

[illegible] people in the room, yet you appear to be [illegible] sight. Impress friends, family. See how [illegible] on how to Become a Ventriloquist

No. F-24 . . . . . only 25c

JIU-JITSU

Don't back away from anyone - again! This popular book tells you how to defend yourself against ANYONE even bullies, plus many pictures showing accurate details. FREE book on strong man stunts also included

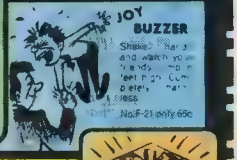
No. F-14 . . . . . only $1.00

1001 things for FREE

A list that tells you where to send for free samples, Books, foreign stamps, coins, maps, showbickets, toys, films, posters, etc. They are yours for the asking. Hundreds of $$$ worth of free offers

No. F-12 . . . . . only 50c

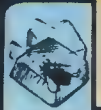
3 lists . . . . . for only $1.00



JOY BUZZER

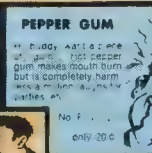
Shake hands and watch your friends [illegible] feel pain. Completely harmless

No. F-21 only 65c



FLY IN ICE

[illegible]



PEPPER GUM

[illegible] Buddy will [illegible] of gum - not pepper gum, makes mouth burn but is completely harmless [illegible]

No. F [illegible]

only 20c

SPY 'SPECS'

[illegible] your friends [illegible] now is that really his soul you see inside his head? Prove to him you can see [illegible]

No. F-19 . . . . only $1.00

SURPRISE PACKAGE

Surprise packages that will give you a thrill. We guarantee you more than your money's worth

No. F-18 . . . . . only 50c

PRANKSTER WHISTLE

[illegible] years. Just place a [illegible] and watch [illegible] completely harmless

No. F-22 . . . . . only 25c

SECRET BOOK SAFE

The Secret Book Safe hides itself on your bookshelf. Looks like a real book. Even [illegible] open it because of secret [illegible] Hides only 12 [illegible] valuables, treasures, [illegible] Looks like [illegible] stamped leather binding

No. F-28 . . . . . only $1.00

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BOX 826, NIAGARA FALLS, N.Y. 14302

RUSH ME THE ITEMS LISTED BELOW. If I am not 100% delighted, I may return any part of my purchase after the ten day free trial for full refund.

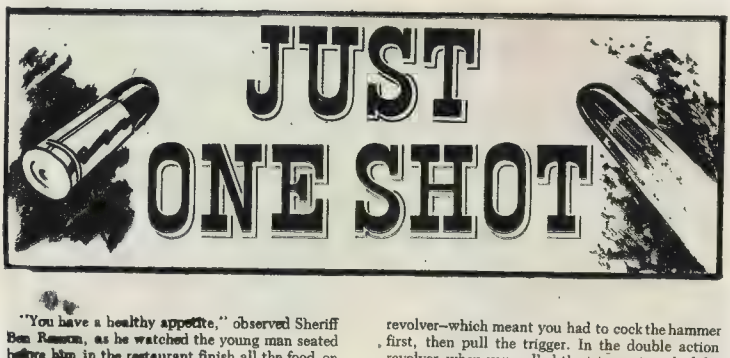
ITEM NO.	NAME OF ITEM	HOW MANY	TOTAL $

I enclose [illegible] plus 15c postage and shipping in cash, check or money order

I enclose 10c for Catalogue

NAME [illegible]

ADDRESS [illegible]



"You have a healthy appetite," observed Sheriff Ben Reason, as he watched the young man seated before him in the restaurant finish all the food on his plate. "Now be sensible. Eating costs money. You can't ride a horse or shoot a gun. What kind of a job do you think you can get?"

"Surely there must be people who want my ability to write a good letter and take care of their business books," replied John Peters. "Why can't you hire me for that work?"

"Get some sense into your head," snapped back the sheriff. "My budget allows forty dollars a month for another deputy. I hire you as a deputy but you really are my secretary. You must wear a badge but you don't have to carry a gun. And probably you will be safer that way."

So, for the next month, Deputy Sheriff John Peters did all the work required of him by his boss. And in his spare time he earned extra money writing letters for men who somehow had to admit that they could hardly tell one word from another. The town began to like the peaceful deputy who didn't carry a gun.

Then, on the fateful day of August 7, 1873, things changed. The young deputy went into the Big Drink Cafe. He had gone over some records for the proprietor, Mike Shannis. At that very moment, Lee Dwyer entered. At that time Lee was one of the three leading killers, bad men, wanted men--all with a price on their heads. He spotted the hated deputy badge on young John Peters.

"I give you three to draw," he yelled. "If not, then I shoot you. I hate all of your breed."

"But I haven't got a gun on me," protested John Peters, who didn't seem frightened at all. "If you shoot me, that would be plain murder."

"So get a gun," snarled the killer. "Hey, you, Mike Shannis, you give him your six-shooter."

The witnesses in the saloon at that time all agree only on one thing: namely, that the owner of the Big Drink Cafe did hand the young man a six-shooter. But after that specific point, nobody told the same story. One version, and the leading one at that, was that Mike Shannis handed the young man a cocked Colt 44. Bear in mind that the favorite gun on the border at that time was a single action revolver--which meant you had to cock the hammer first, then pull the trigger. In the double action revolver, when you pulled the trigger, it cocked the hammer and rotated the cylinder with the bullets in it.

So, what happened? We continue with that leading version of the story. The young deputy sheriff had the gun in his hand, turned around, and somehow the hammer fell down. The firing pin hit a cartridge--and a killer fell dead to the floor with a bullet in his heart.

Another version says that the sheriff himself did the shooting. He always kept an eye on his favorite clerk or deputy. That day the sheriff was on a top balcony. When he saw what was going to happen, he fired to protect his man.

And there is a third version which says that John Peters was really a crack shot. He deliberately set up things so that the killer would walk into a trap.

You take your choice of what you want to believe. I have even read a version that says the killer wasn't killed at all! He suffered a heart attack- and then the frightened young man pulled the trigger of his gun, with the bullet going wild.

But at least one thing was certain: An unknown young man got the credit for killing a feared killer. And it took a month and a half for all the reward money to come in.

"But I don't think I killed him," maintained the young deputy.

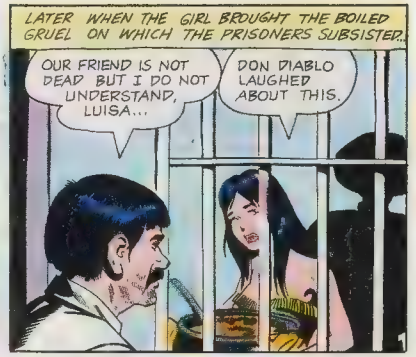
"The money is all yours and rightfully so," said the sheriff. "And I figure you are going to leave me. Even though the city fathers have offered to double your salary."

"I would be a fool to leave here," grinned the young man. "With every gunslinger waiting for the chance to increase his reputation by shooting me, I remain here. Maybe later I will go into politics or business."

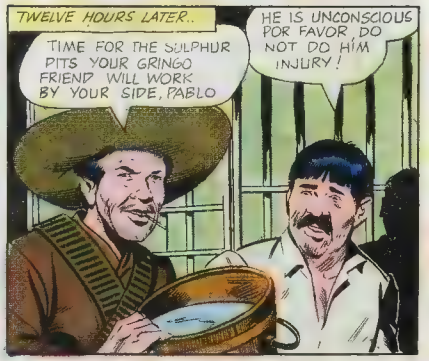
And if the name of John Peters does sound a bit familiar, may I remind you that he was the same John Peters who became Senator Peters and then our ambassador abroad. He fired but one shot in his life--maybe--but it made his reputation.

THE FLYING DEATH
THE THUNDER OF THE MONSTER'S GUN FILLED THE CELL... AND BILLY THE KID WAS BLASTED BACK AS THE IMPACT SMASHED HIS CHEST!
NO! HE
YOU BUNGLING FOOL!
BLAM!
I AM SORRY, CHIVITO... I 'AVE BROUGHT DEATH TO YOU BEFORE YOUR TIME!
THERE IS NO GAPING HOLE IN HIS CHEST, PABLO! WHERE IS THE WOUND MADE BY THE BULLET OF DIABLO'S GUN?
THERE MUST BE A WOUND, ARTURO! AND BLOOD BUT HE DOES NOT BLEED...
9

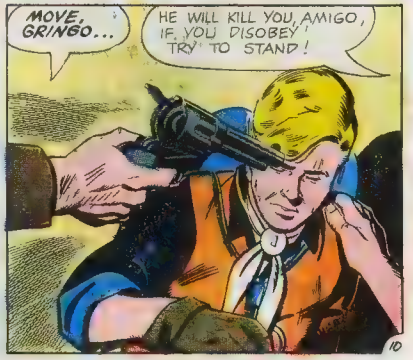
THE HEART BEATS..IT IS AS THOUGH HE WERE SLEEPING.


LATER WHEN THE GIRL BROUGHT THE BOILED GRUEL ON WHICH THE PRISONERS SUBSISTED.
OUR FRIEND IS NOT DEAD BUT I DO NOT UNDERSTAND, LUISA...
DON DIABLO LAUGHED ABOUT THIS.

IN THE GUN WAS A POWDER CHARGE AND CRYSTALS OF A DRUG WHICH INDUCES SLEEP THE DRUG WENT THROUGH HIS SKIN AND INTO HIS BLOODSTREAM HE WILL SLEEP UNTIL THE EFFECT WEARS OFF!


TWELVE HOURS LATER..
TIME FOR THE SULPHUR PITS YOUR GRINGO FRIEND WILL WORK BY YOUR SIDE, PABLO
HE IS UNCONSCIOUS POR FAVOR DO NOT DO HIM INJURY!

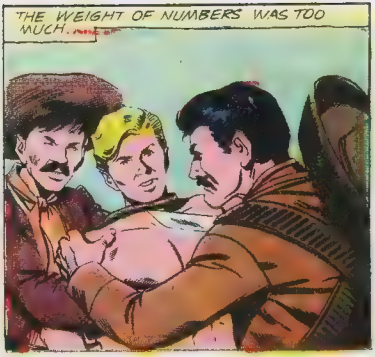
HE'LL WAKE UP NOW!
SPLOSH!

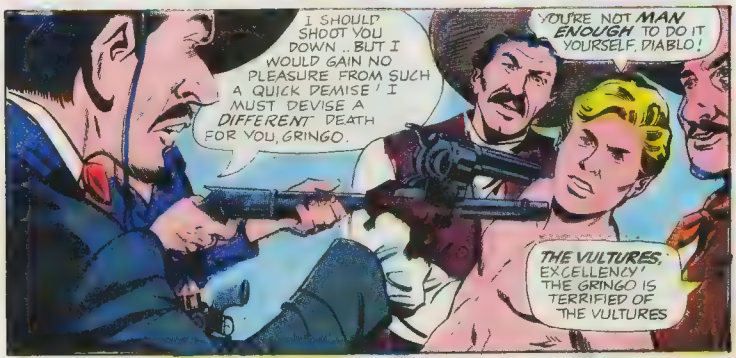

MOVE, GRINGO...
HE WILL KILL YOU, AMIGO, IF YOU DISOBEY! TRY TO STAND!

MOVE, GRINGO! YOU WILL WORK FAST OR BE KILLED!
IT IS TRUE, CHIVITO! THE GUARDS HAVE ORDERS TO KILL THOSE WHO DO NOT PRODUCE!
THE NEXT HOURS WERE AGONY!
THERE IS NO MANHOOD LEFT IN YOU, GRINGO! YOU ARE A WEAKLING AND A COWARD!
DON DIABLO, I
YOU ARGUE? YOU HAVE MUCH TO LEARN, GRINGO!
OOOOFFF!
SOCK!
MY PETS ANTICIPATE THE MEAL YOU WILL MAKE FOR THEM, GRINGO!
STINKIN CARRION-EATER!
YOU WILL BE WHIPPED FOR THAT, GRINGO!

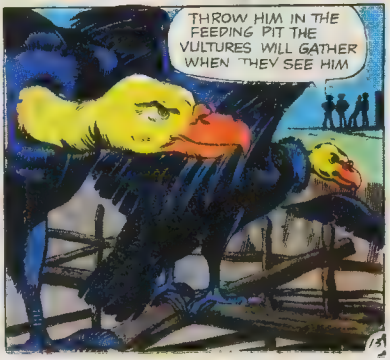
THE GUARD RAISED HIS WHIP.. BUT BILLY, THE KID'S FIST WAS QUICKER!
QUICK... THE GRINGO IS. OOOFF!
SOCK!
GIMME THIS!
YOU WEEL DIE NOW, GRINGO!
WHUSHH!
I, ROJO, AM THE MASTER OF THE WHIP!
CRAAK!
NOW, MAESTRO C'MERE!
CARAMBA!
CRAAK!
THIS IS MY STYLE OF FIGHTIN'!
SOCK!

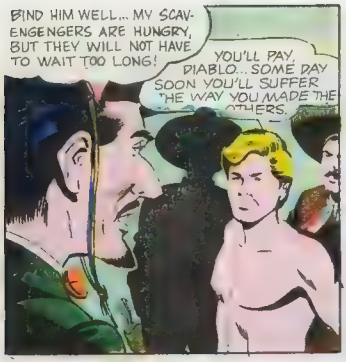
BILLY THE KID SLUGGED THE NEXT THUG WHO LEAPED FOR HIM BUT ANOTHER FOLLOWED HIM AND .
SOCK!

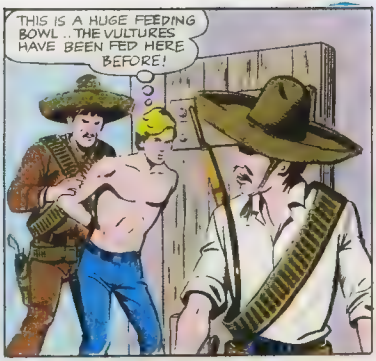

THE WEIGHT OF NUMBERS WAS TOO MUCH.

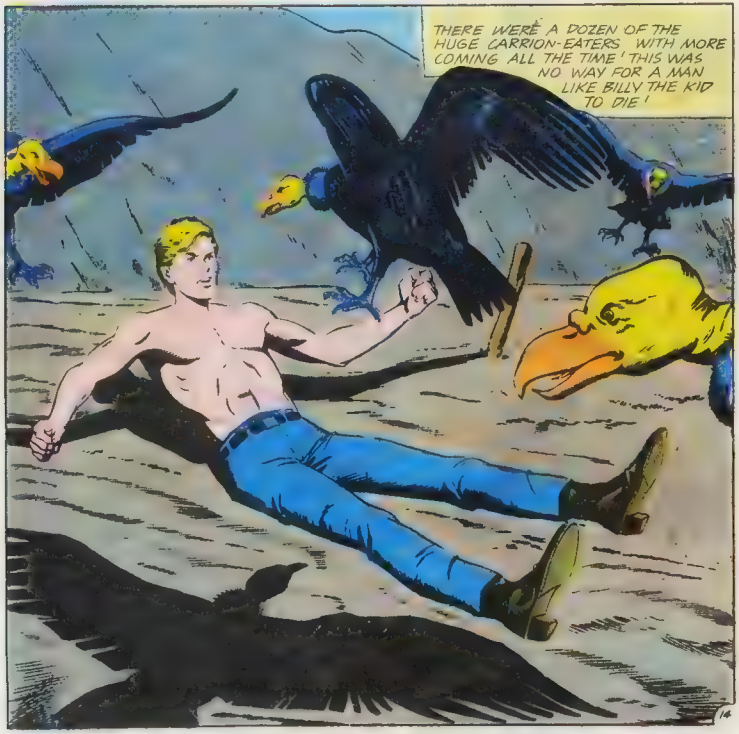

I SHOULD SHOOT YOU DOWN .. BUT I WOULD GAIN NO PLEASURE FROM SUCH A QUICK DEMISE ! I MUST DEVISE A DIFFERENT DEATH FOR YOU, GRINGO.
YOU'RE NOT MAN ENOUGH TO DO IT YOURSELF, DIABLO !
THE VULTURES, EXCELLENCY ! THE GRINGO IS TERRIFIED OF THE VULTURES

AHH ! YES . . MY PETS YOU SEEM TO HAVE A PATH-OLOGICAL FEAR OF MY FRIENDS


THROW HIM IN THE FEEDING PIT THE VULTURES WILL GATHER WHEN THEY SEE HIM

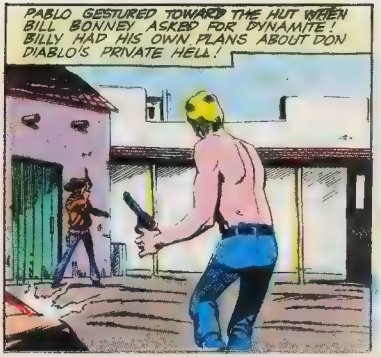

BIND HIM WELL... MY SCAVENGENGERS ARE HUNGRY, BUT THEY WILL NOT HAVE TO WAIT TOO LONG!
YOU'LL PAY, DIABLO... SOME DAY SOON YOU'LL SUFFER THE WAY YOU MADE THE

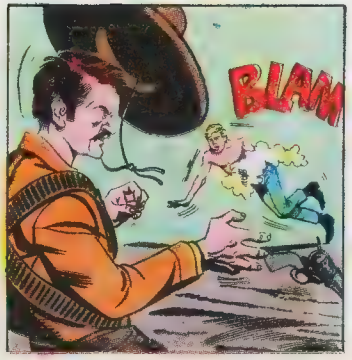

THIS IS A HUGE FEEDING BOWL.. THE VULTURES HAVE BEEN FED HERE BEFORE!

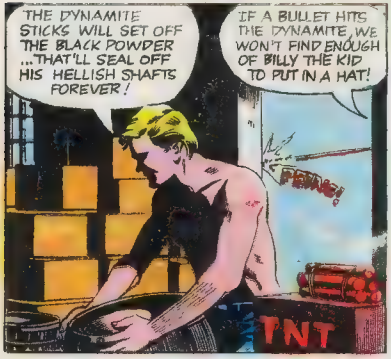

THERE WERE A DOZEN OF THE HUGE CARRION-EATERS WITH MORE COMING ALL THE TIME! THIS WAS NO WAY FOR A MAN LIKE BILLY THE KID TO DIE!

THEY CALL HIM DON DIABLO . NOBODY WAS EVER NAMED BETTER!
SUDDENLY, BILLY THE KID OPENED HIS EYES HE LUNGED AT THE NEAREST VULTURE AND TRIED TO GET THE FIRST BITE! THE STARTLED SCAVENGERS FLED..
ROOOWWR!
..OOK THE ONE WITH THE MISSING TAIL-FEATHERS .. HE'LL TEAR AT THE GRINGO FIRST I THINK!
SEIZE THEIR GUNS!
I HAVE THIS ONE, MUCHACHA!
THE SLAVES. IT IS A REVOLT, EXCELLENCY!
AND I HAVE THIS ONE. THE WORST OF THEM ALL!
15

TAKE A KNIFE... FREE EL CHIVITO OF HIS BONDS!
BANG
GIT AWAY!
LIE STILL HOMBRE. I WILL CUT THE ROPES!
I HAVE A GUN, CHIVITO. YOU USE IT WHEN YOUR HANDS ARE FREE!
" HURRY, MUCHACHA!
BANG!
CHIVITO. A GUARD!
GOT HIM, HONEY! NOW, HURRY!
BLAM
YOU TELL US WHAT TO DO, CHIVITO!
I'LL KEEP 'EM OFF YOUR BACK, PABLO FREE THE OTHERS GET 'EM OUT OF THE SULPHUR PITS!
BANG! BANG!
BLAM!


PABLO GESTURED TOWARD THE HUT WHEN BILL BONNEY ASKED FOR DYNAMITE! BILLY HAD HIS OWN PLANS ABOUT DON DIABLO'S PRIVATE HELL!


BLAM


THE DYNAMITE STICKS WILL SET OFF THE BLACK POWDER ...THAT'LL SEAL OFF HIS HELLISH SHAFTS FOREVER!
IF A BULLET HITS THE DYNAMITE, WE WON'T FIND ENOUGH OF BILLY THE KID TO PUT IN A HAT!
PSSHH!
TNT

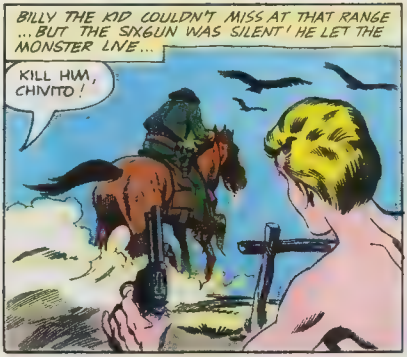
YOU BUNGLING FOOLS! I WON'T MISS!

YOU SEE! ADIOS, GRINGO!
YOU FIEND.. CHIVITO IS DEAD!
WHAM!

RECAPTURE THE PRISONERS! I WILL EXECUTE PABLO AND HIS DAUGHTER!
PABLO FREED THE SLAVES!

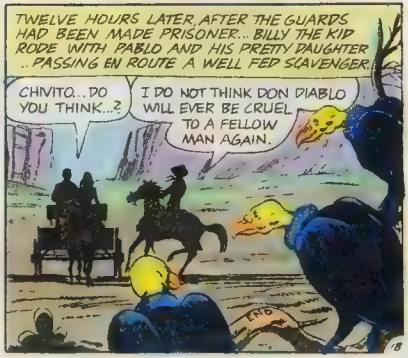
EXCELLENCY! EL CHIVITO HE IS NOT DEAD!
HE. UNGH!
YOU BUNGLING FOOLS...
WHAM!

DON DIABLO IS ESCAPING CHIVITO!


BILLY THE KID COULDN'T MISS AT THAT RANGE ...BUT THE SIXGUN WAS SILENT! HE LET THE MONSTER LIVE...
KILL HIM, CHIVITO!

YOU SHOULD'VE KILLED HIM!
NO HE WON'T GO FAR ON THAT HORSE!

HE'LL GET TEN OR TWELVE MILES INTO THE DESERT... NO FURTHER! AND HIS VULTURES ARE HALF-STARVED NOW! AFTER A FEW HOURS THERE WITHOUT FOOD ...I FEEL SORRY FOR THE POOR DEVIL!


TWELVE HOURS LATER, AFTER THE GUARDS HAD BEEN MADE PRISONER... BILLY THE KID RODE WITH PABLO AND HIS PRETTY DAUGHTER ..PASSING EN ROUTE A WELL FED SCAVENGER.
CHIVITO...DO YOU THINK...?
I DO NOT THINK DON DIABLO WILL EVER BE CRUEL TO A FELLOW MAN AGAIN.
THE END

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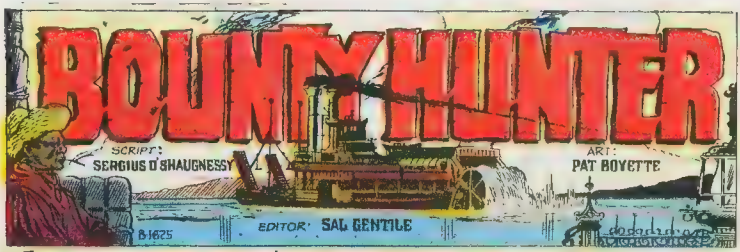


FROM THE LETTERS OF **SHAWN O'MEARA** TO HIS FATHER IN COUNTY CORK, IRELAND:
"I'm telling you, dad, this is no place for poetry..this new world! There we were, me and Miss Sharon, sharing a summer eve as sweet as a baby's smile..."

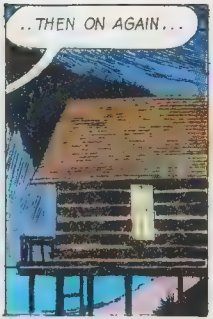
READ ME SOME MORE SHAKESPEARE, SHAWN! IF YOU DON'T MIND!
MY PLEASURE, MISS SHARON!
"BUT SOFT! WHAT LIGHT THROUGH YON WINDOW BREAKS..."
BOOM
SEE? NO PLACE FOR POETRY AT ALL...

SO THERE I WAS, FLAT ON MY FACE WATCHING PIKE MCGINTY, MEANEST MAN ON THE MISSISSIPPI, BREAK JAIL...
THAT DYNAMITE DO MAKE A SOUND!
LES' CLEAR OUT!
YEAH! AS SOON AS I SETTLE WITH THE DUDE WHUT PUT ME BEHIND BARS...
.. IF'N YA KNOW ANY PRAYERS, O'MEARA, YA BEST SAY 'EM NOW!
MY LIMBS WERE HEAVY AS A SINNER'S SOUL..I WAS UNABLE TO MOVE! THEN..
KLANG
HEAD FOR COVER!
BOOM
SHARON'S FATHER, MARSHAL BEN AMES, ARRIVED JUST IN TIME TO PROLONG MY STAY ON EARTH! I'D NEVER SEEN ANYTHING PRETTIER THAN HIS LEATHERY FACE..EXCEPT HIS BLAZING GUN...

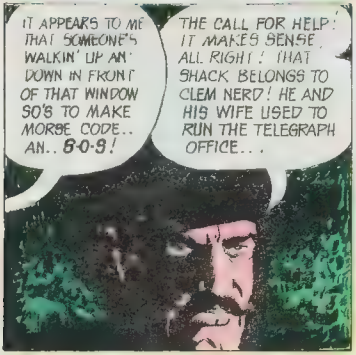
MY HEAD HUMMING LIKE A HIVE, I GOT TO M' FEET!
YOU ALL RIGHT, SHAWN?
THANKS TO YOURSELF, I AM, MARSHAL!
BUT-McGINTY! HE'S ESCAPED!
YEAH! RECKON I'D BEST RIDE AFTER HIM 'FORE HE GETS TOO FAR!
I'LL PICK UP A PONY AND M' PISTOL AND JOIN YOU IN THE HUNT!
I APPRECIATE THE OFFER, SHAWN! BUT, YOUR JOB ENDED WHEN YOU BROUGHT McGINTY IN! YOU'RE A BOUNTY HUNTER.. AND THERE'S NO BOUNTY AVAILABLE FOR A RE-CAPTURE!
BOUNTY OR NO BOUNTY.. MY JOB IS THE SAME AS YOURS .. TO WIPE SCUM LIKE McGINTY OFF THE RIVER!
NOW, I'LL SAY THE TRUTH! THIS NEXT PART I'M KIND OF MAKING UP FROM WHAT WAS TOLD ME LATER! I WASN'T THERE, AT THE SHACK WHERE LIVED CLEM NERD AND HIS WIFE, CLARISSA!
.. YORE GITTIN' SO YEW HIT THE SPITTOON MOST EVER' TIME, PAW!
YUP!
SOMEONE'S A-KNOCKIN', MAW! YEW GIT IT! I GOT UP LAST MONTH!
.. WHO IN TARNATION IS A-VISITIN' AT THIS UNCHRISTIAN HOUR...
SLANG
NOK
3.

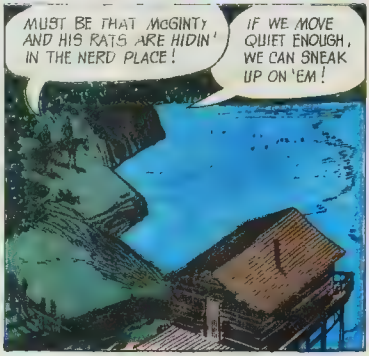
DON'T TRY NOTHING, FOLKS ..AN' MAYBE I WON'T KILL YA.. RIGHT AWAY!
IT'S..IT'S PIKE McGINTY TH' FAMOUSEST RIVER PIRATE!
WE'RE FIGGERIN' ON HOLIN' UP HERE 'TILL TOMORROW..BY THEN, AMES'LL HAVE STOPPED LOOKIN' FER US!
SO THERE THEY WERE, THOSE PIRATES AND THE OLD COUPLE, CRAMPED TOGETHER IN THAT SHACK FOR HOURS.. LIKE EGGS IN A NEST...
STOP THET PACIN' UP AN' DOWN OLD WOMAN!
I CAN'T HELP IT..I'M PLUMB SCAR ED!
...AH, SHE WAS A CRAFTY ONE, WAS THAT LADY! BECAUSE AS A MATTER OF FACT THE MARSHAL AND ME WERE NEARBY, ON A RIDGE OVERLOOKING THE CABIN!
IF'N MY IDEA DON'T WORK..PAW AN' ME'LL BE DEAD 'FORE THIS TIME TOMORRA! I ONLY HOPE THE MARSHAL'S NEAR ENOUGH!
SEEMS, LIKE WE LOST THE TRAIL, SHAWN! AN' WE AIN'T GOT A CHANCE OF PICKIN' IT UP AGAIN IN THE DARK!
'TIS A PITY...SAY, MARSHAL, DO YOU NOTICE ANYTHING PECULIAR ABOUT YONDER SHACK!? LOOK AT THE WINDOW!

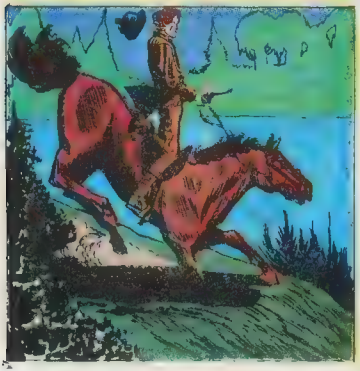
NOTICE HOW THE LIGHTS KEEP BUNKIN' OFF...


..THEN ON AGAIN...

..AND THEN OFF! THERE'S A PATTERN THERE..THREE SHORT BLINKS, FOLLOWED BY THREE LONG BLINKS, AN' THEN THREE SHORT


IT APPEARS TO ME THAT SOMEONE'S WALKIN' UP AN' DOWN IN FRONT OF THAT WINDOW SO'S TO MAKE MORSE CODE.. AN.. S-O-S!
THE CALL FOR HELP! IT MAKES SENSE, ALL RIGHT! THAT SHACK BELONGS TO CLEM NERD! HE AND HIS WIFE USED TO RUN THE TELEGRAPH OFFICE...


MUST BE THAT McGINTY AND HIS RATS ARE HIDIN' IN THE NERD PLACE!
IF WE MOVE QUIET ENOUGH, WE CAN SNEAK UP ON 'EM!

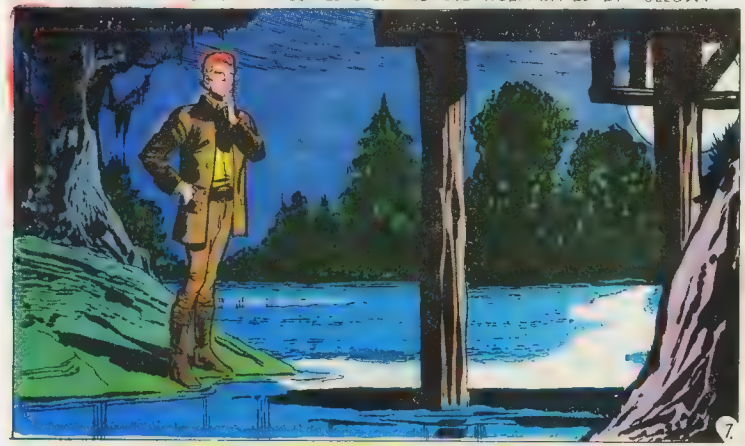

SOMETIMES I FEEL THAT FATE IS A WEE BIT CRUELER THAN IT MIGHT BE! FOR AT THAT INSTANT, MY STEED STEPPED INTO A POT HOLE!

WE BOTH WENT TUMBLING! AND TO MAKE MATTERS WORSE, I ACCIDENTALLY TRIGGERED A SHOT!
KA-POW!

SOMEBODY'S OUT THERE!
I SEEN THE MOONLIGHT SHININ' OFF A TIN STAR!
BLAST 'EM!
YUP
ZLANG
NEXT INSTANT THE AIR WAS FULL OF LEAD!
..BUT, I UNDERESTIMATED THE SLIMINESS OF THAT RAT McGINTY!
LISSEN TO ME, AMES! 'LESS YOU AN' WHOEVER'S WITH YA THROW DOWN YER IRONS AN' COME OUT WITH YER HANDS HIGH, ME AN' MUH MEN ARE GONNA GUN THIS OLD MAN AN' WOMAN!
HOLD IT, FELLERS! NO USE WASTIN' GUNPOWDER ..NOT WHEN WE CAN MAKE 'EM SURRENDER!
YUP!
WE DON'T DARE SHOOT BACK, FOR FEAR OF HITTING THE OLD FOLKS!
. . . ON THE OTHER HAND.. IF THEY LEAVE THE SHACK, WE CAN NAIL 'EM EASY!

YA HEAR ME AMES?
I HEARD YOU SIDEWINDER!
I HEARD HIM, RIGHT ENOUGH..BUT I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO! IF I DON'T DO WHAT HE SAYS..THE OLD FOLKS WILL BE KILLED ..IF I LET McGINTY ESCAPE..THEN EVEN MORE INNOCENT PEOPLE WILL DIE!
THERE MAY BE ANOTHER WAY, MARSHAL ..IF YOU CAN STALL McGINTY FOR ABOUT FIVE MINUTES!
I'M WAITIN', AMES! GIMME YOUR ANSWER!
YOU GOT A PLAN, SON?
AYE! THAT I HAVE! JUST KEEP McGINTY BLABBERIN'..AND LEAVE THE REST TO ME!

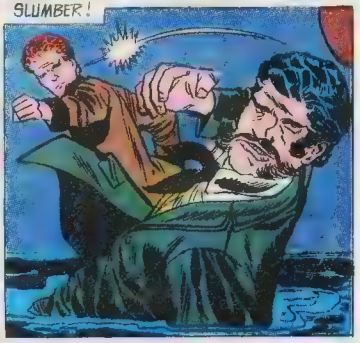
WHILE THE MARSHAL TRADED STALLING WORDS WITH McGINTY, I INCHED TOWARD THE REAR OF THE NERDY'S SHACK! IT JUTTED OVER THE RIVER..SUPPORTED BY POLES..!!

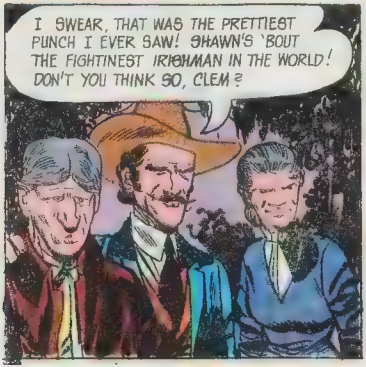


SILENT AS A SAINT'S BOAST I SLIPPED INTO THE WATER
WITH ALL MY STRENGTH..I PULLED..
THE POLE'S GIVING WAY...
CREEE
WHUT'S HAPPENING ?
MUST BE AN EARTHQUAKE!
YUP!
THE NEXT SECOND I FOUND OUT, AS McGINTY'S FINGERS CLOSED OVER MY WIND-PIPE...
ONE BY ONE, THE BADDIES SURFACED AND IMMEDIATELY WENT TO SLEEP...
BONG
THAT ACCOUNTS FER ALL OF 'EM EXCEPT McGINTY! WHERE IS THAT SKUNK?
AAAA

INKY MISSISSIPPI BLACKNESS CLOSED OVER ME! MY LUNGS WERE EMPTY AS A SPENDTHRIFT'S PURSE, AND I KNEW I HAD ONLY INSTANTS LEFT TO LIVE UNLESS I ACTED QUICKLY....

ANOTHER BLOW AND HE SWOONED INTO SOUND SLUMBER!





And on that eloquent note, I'll close! Take care of yourself, dad, and be looking for my next letter! Till then,

SHAWN

THE END

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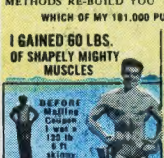

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